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## The Banana as a Food Product.

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Much of vital importance has been and is being said about conservation along all food products. Many articles have been and are being brought forward as substitutes for wheat, meat, etc. Very little of value has been said about the banana—an important food product.

We have here a fruit containing a large per cent of the carbohydrates; hence an important staple food. The ash of the banana contains a large per cent of the phosphates, sulphates and chlorides of potash, soda, magnesia and lime, all of which are essential in body economy. It lacks in protein and fats. A free use of milk with the banana will reduce the amount of meat necessary for body needs. There being a close proximity between the potato and banana, we could readily drop the potato from our dietary list without deleterious results. The banana contains approximately 20 per cent more fuel in food value, as shown by analysis.

It might be of interest to compare the banana with the potato:

	Potato.	Banana.
Water .....	78.8%	75.8%
Protein .....	2.2%	1.8%
Fat .....	0.1%	0.6%
Carbohydrates, including fiber .....	18.0%	22.0%
Ash .....	1.0%	0.8%
Calories, per pound .....	385	460

In a paper of this character, as much as it might be desired to make a comparative analysis of a large number of foods, we find it next to impossible to do so.

In our study of essential food products we must keep constantly before us the distinctive difference of heat-giving and tissue-building products. Meats are protein foods—tissue builders. They make good the losses due to the wear and tear of body machinery. The banana produces the carbohydrates that keep the machinery in running order. The best all-round food, then, would consist of the banana coupled with a small amount of protein foods. The edible portion of steak contains 65.5 per cent of water; haddock, 81 to 82 per cent; while the banana contains 75.5 per cent. The meat and fish, however, contain a greater per cent of protein. It is found upon analysis that the banana ash contains silica, 2.19 per cent; lime, 1.82 per cent; iron oxide, 0.18 per cent; phosphoric acid, 7.68 per cent; magnesia, 6.45 per cent; soda, 15.11 per cent; potash, 43.55 per cent; sulphur trioxide, 3.26 per cent; chlorine, 7.23 per cent. Here we find a large per cent of base-forming salts, which are so essential.

Essential body food must contain nonnitrogenous substances to develop energy, and nitrogenous ones for repair of tissue waste. The amount of protein food should not exceed 15 per cent, for we have no storage for it as is the case with fats.

Age and manual labor performed will determine the amount of fuel food needed. During the period of growth children burn their food up more rapidly, and as the banana is a high-power fuel producer for the body, besides being rich in the desirable salts, base-forming minerals, it is of great value as food for the child.

The banana flour, of which little is known in the United States, is said to be very nutritious. The banana can be used in a variety of ways—baked, boiled, fried, served as chips, French fried, etc. In all of the ways suggested, they are excellent in taste and highly nutritious. If used as vegetables they should be taken before the full period of ripeness. At this time they contain more starch and less sugar. If thoroughly ripe it is easy of digestion. Some are of the opinion that if dark brown spots are visible the fruit has reached the point of destruction; but this condition simply means complete ripeness.

Now, the time required for digestion of some other foods as compared with the banana is an important factor. The ripe banana will be digested in 1 hour 40 minutes; tomato, 2 hours 5 minutes; beans, 2 hours 30 minutes; green peas, 2 hours 30 minutes; oatmeal, 3 hours 5 minutes; boiled potatoes, 3 hours 30 minutes; turnips, 4 hours; cabbage, 4 hours 30 minutes; roast mutton, 3 hours 15 minutes; roast beef and soft-boiled eggs, 3 hours 20 minutes to 3 hours 30 minutes; boiled beef, 4 hours 15 minutes; roast pork, 5 hours 20 minutes; apples, 2 hours 20 minutes; mackerel, 4 hours; nuts, 4 hours. You will please note that 1 hour and 45 minutes is the time necessary to digest the banana, and it contains more nutrition per pound than fish or vegetables. It provides more food than any single fresh fruit, vegetable, fish, milk or eggs, and it is a staple food for universal use. The banana is an important food, easily digested—in fact, more so than fish or vegetables.

The facts are, we do not up to this hour fully understand or appreciate what the banana has in store for us as a food product. Its wealth cannot be measured by dollars and cents.

It is evident from figures given that the banana produces more food for the same cost than any fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, meat, milk or eggs. The table given below shows the caloric value per pound of the edible portion of the banana as compared with many of the foods in common use and upon which we depend for subsistence:

	<i>Calories.</i>		<i>Calories.</i>
Banana .....	460	Oysters, solids .....	230
Spinach .....	110	Scallops .....	345
Green peas .....	465	Haddock .....	335
Onions .....	225	Flounder .....	290
Squash .....	215	Halibut .....	470
Parsnips .....	300	Blue fish .....	410
Cabbage .....	145	Chicken .....	505
Green corn .....	470	Pickled tripe .....	270
Fresh Lima beans .....	570	Oranges .....	240
Beets .....	215	Grapes .....	450
Macaroni, cooked .....	415	Figs .....	380
Boiled oatmeal .....	285	Cherries .....	365
Asparagus .....	105	Apples .....	290
String beans .....	95	Milk, whole .....	325
Clams, raw .....	240	Round steak, medium fat.....	450
Lobster .....	390	Round steak, lean .....	540
Carrots .....	210		

There are but seven out of the thirty-three given in the above table that equal or excel the banana, and three of these are so close that they need not be referred to.

Eat more bananas, drink more milk, and use in this connection apples quite freely, then use, in a small degree, meats of all kinds, and you will be kept in a far better physical condition.